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# The cloak and dagger boom

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**B**ismarck once wrote: "There is only one military secret: there are no military secrets."

He was wrong. There are, indeed, strategic, tactical, and scientific secrets that are guarded at great cost and assaulted at even greater cost and with much danger.

Moses sent 12 men "to spy out the Land of Canaan." The agents of Sir Francis Walsingham gave Elizabeth I time to meet the Invincible

Armada with a new navy of low-slung, speedy ships bearing long-range culverins.

Benedict Arnold sold the plans of West Point to Sir Henry Clinton, and, if Major Andre had been able to deliver them, the staggering Revolution might well have been crushed. Interception of the Zimmerman telegram in 1917 probably tilted uncertain America into World War I.

And if the British hadn't sniffed out Hitler's heavy water experiments at Peenemunde and pranged the laboratories incessantly, the Allies might have slept until awakened by a Nazi atomic bomb. Spies do make a difference.

The shock that many Americans have felt since sensational spy charges were leveled last month against John Walker, his brother, son, and a close associate is well-justified. In spite of swift Navy action to change codes and cipher keys, it is possible that many thousands of old messages monitored by the Russians are now readable, and that much of America's contingency planning and order of battle now stands bare.

The convoluted spy novels of David Cornwell, writing as John Le Carre, may be overdramatized, but the wheels-within-wheels they describe are not exaggerated.

Where once there were desultory efforts to steal letters, seduce officers, and crack vulnerable ciphers — a process briefly interrupted in America when Hoover's Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, fatuously stated, "Gentlemen do not open each other's mail" — spying and counter-intelligence have become a gigantic business, gobbling billions.

The pinnacle of spying, perhaps, is the highly placed "mole" installed next to the men who make high policy. Alger Hiss stood behind the dying Franklin D. Roosevelt at Yalta and gave advice that may have helped put Central Europe under Russian control. Burgess and Maclean were privy to the innermost secrets of Washington's British Embassy. Later, when they fled London for Moscow in the nick of time, one could only guess at the damage.

One of the most rewarding types of espionage is the theft of high-tech secrets. A nation with lagging technology can cut corners by lifting the fruits of another nation's research. The Rosenbergs could have advanced Russia's arrival at the hydrogen bomb by several years, saving the Kremlin hundreds of millions of dollars.

The ideological fervor for communism, which, through the 1960s, seems to have actuated most foreign nationals spying for Russia, has undoubtedly cooled. The Soviets have had two-thirds of a century to bring about their human paradise, and true believers are falling away. But greed is eternal and secret-buying intensifies as technology grows more abstruse.

No "fence" for stolen jewelry gives as poor value to the thief as the secret-buyer. After the first sale, the informer is in the hands of his purchasers, subject to demands that he bring more and more, possibly for less and less reward, lest he be anonymously denounced to his own government. Spying for money is a sucker's game, but sometimes the suckers save themselves by confessing all to their own intelligence services and then becoming double-spies.

Although clever espionage operates on a cellular system in which the spy knows only the man who controls him, a double-spy can be made to mix important false information with less-important truth, and by setting in motion a series of arrests up the espionage ladder, eventually lead to the entrapment of a big fish.

America may have cause to regret that it hosts the United Nations Secretariat. While we can control in a measure the movement of Russian diplomats, we cannot hinder Russians ostensibly serving as employees of U.N. agencies. Suppose we had thousands of Americans in Russia as free to poke around as U.N. workers are in this country!

It's a dirty world, but, as espionage grows, countermeasures become more vital. Some day, if a polite gentleman asks us to take a lie detector test, instead of huffing, puffing, and showing our medals, it might be smarter to understand.